

West Sussex to Wester Ross in 1974

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(concluded from page 252)

The following three nights were excellent, and on the 8th a total of 91 species entered the garden trap. Some of the more interesting species were *Apamea scopolacina* Esp., *Cosmia pyralina* Denis and Schiff., *Lithosia complana* Linn., *Hydrelia flammeolaria* Hufn., *Hyloicus pinastri* Linn., *Harpyia bifida* Brahm., *Tethea ocularis* Linn., *Apatele leporina* Linn. and *Scopula imitaria* Hufn. From the 10th to 17th, several interesting species put in their appearance including *Euphyia rubidata* Denis and Schiff. on the 13th; *Apamea ypsilon* Denis and Schiff. on the 14th; *Dyoterygia scabriuscula* Linn., *Hemistola immaculata* Thunb. and *Deuteronomos erosaria* Denis and Schiff. on the 16th.

On the 17th, I took my trap to Ambersham Common. It became very damp after midnight and only 42 species came. The most numerous species was *Lycophotia varia* de Vill., closely followed by *Pachycnema hippocastanaria* Hübn. and *C. mesomella*. Other species of interest were *Pseudoterpna pruinata* Walker, *Semiothisa alternata* Denis and Schiff., *Malacosoma neustria* Linn., *Sterrrha sylvestraria* Hübn., the yellow variety of *Lithosia griseola* Hübn. and *Sterrrha straminata* Borkh.

On the 18th, I saw *Macroglossum stellatarum* Linn. at Buddleia in Rewell Wood. From the 18th to 25th there were some very good nights and I was kept busy at my garden trap which contained 91 species on the 19th. During this period I took *Tethea duplaris* Linn., *Pyrrhia umbra* Hufn., *Leucoma salicis* Linn., *Sterrrha emarginata* Linn., *Semiothisa alternata* Denis and Schiff., *Pseudoips prasinana* Linn., *Perizoma bifaciata* Haw., *Eupithecia haworthiata* Dbldy. and many others. I was rather disappointed that there were no immigrants present.

A daytime visit to Ambersham Common on the 21st proved well worthwhile. In addition to finding a colony of *Plebejus argus* Linn., I noted the only *Eumenis semele* Linn. I have seen in West Sussex. Among other butterflies were *Argynnis paphia* Linn. and *Limenitis camilla* Linn. Several *Euchoeca nebulata* Scop. were taken amongst some alders.

On the 26th I was again at Ambersham Common with moth trap and generator. This time I took 70 species. It was a very enjoyable night and I was kept busy. Notable species were three *H. pinastri*, three *Lithacodia fasciana* Linn., two *Agrotis vestigialis* Hufn., *Lygephila pastinum* Treits., three *Leucania pudorina* Denis and Schiff., *Lasiocampa quercus* Linn., *Euphyia unangulata* Haw., *Cosymbia albipunctata* Hufn., *Eupithecia goossensiata* Mabilie and *P. bifaciata*. *P. hippocastanaria* was still common.

At Houghton Forest on the 27th, I netted at dusk *Schrankia taenialis* Hübn., and shortly afterwards captured the first of four *Nola albula* Denis and Schiff. to come to my light. I recorded in all 207 moth species in Sussex during July.

* Bramblings, West Walberton Lane, Walberton, Arundel, Sussex.

On the 30th I set off with my family towing the caravan on the long journey up to the highlands of Scotland, via Hadrian's Wall. The first stop was Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire, where I hoped to renew old acquaintances but torrential rain prevented this. Having a great dislike of official camping sites, the second halt on the 31st was at a brand new picnic area near Tow Law in County Durham. This was inside a small wood and seemed quite suitable for the moth trap. The night was quite mild with drizzle at first, then torrential rain, but this did not seem to deter the moths; 53 species were taken and were quite a mixed bag. Some, such as *Hadena thalassina* Denis and Schiff., *Plusia pulchrina* Hübn. and *Procus fasciuncula* Haw. had long since finished in the South, whereas others, such as *Amathes sexstrigata* Haw., had not yet appeared there. Several northern species, such as *Plusia bractea* Denis and Schiff. and *Lygris populata* Linn., were also present.

After satisfying the childrens' urge to walk on Hadrian's Wall, we stayed the night just inside a large wood somewhere near Ecclefechan in Dumfriesshire. It was very damp, and the lush vegetation vouched well for the heavy rainfall. The light brought in 44 species including *Alcia jubata* Thunb., *L. pyraliata*, *L. populata* (typical form and a dark form), *Thyatiris batis* Linn. and *Tethea duplaris* Linn.

The 3rd August found us parked on the shingle of Loch Lubnaig in Perthshire. During the day I managed to capture a single *A. selene* and at night ran the trap on the old railway line near the Falls of Leny. It was not a good night as there was competition with the moon, but amongst others I took *Plusia bractea* Denis and Schiff., *Venusia cambrica* Curtis, *Bombycia viminalis* Fabr., *Parastichtis suspecta* Hübn., *Apamea furva* D. & S. and *Diarsia mendica* Fabr. The last named seemed particularly late.

On the 4th August we arrived at a very isolated spot by the side of Loch Arkaig in the county of Inverness. I did not operate the trap on the first night, but went out with a torch examining flowers, etc. *Colostygia olivata* Denis and Schiff. was abundant and I also took *Lyncometra ocellata* Linn. and *Apamea crenata* Hufn. Both forms of the latter species were later taken in good numbers both here and further north, and it appears to have a completely different season here from elsewhere. I also netted a small moth that turned out to be *Schrankia costae-strigalis* Steph., which according to South (1961) does not appear to have been noted in the Highlands.

The 5th August was an absolutely perfect day with unbroken sunshine and a temperature in the mid 70s. F. Whilst my children were swimming in the loch I looked for insects. Several large fritillaries were seen but not captured. *Erebia aethiops* Esp. was very common and amongst these I captured a tawny specimen, quite unlike the normal form. I thought at first that it was a different species but it now appears to be an unusual variety. There were many large hawking dragonflies around and one I managed to net turned out to be *Cordulegaster*

boltonii Don. I also noted that unpleasant looking Tachinid fly *Echinomya grossa* Linn.

I operated the trap in the evening, braving the midges; 33 species were taken including *Plusia interrogationis* Linn., *P. bractea*, *Celaena leucostigma* Hübn., *Craniophora ligustri* Denis and Schiff., *Lygris testata* Linn. and *Eupithecia expallidata* Dbldy.—this last named being apparently very rare in Scotland.

Rain came on the 6th, but the evening was ideal for moths—and midges! As soon as one set foot outside the caravan one's hands and face literally turned black. However, it was too good a night to miss, so plastered with repellent, I switched on the light and took 42 species. The prize was a single *Apamea exulis* Lef. subsp. *assimilis* Dbld. Additional species to those of the previous night were *V. cambrica*, *Diarsia dahlia* Hübn., *Plemyria rubiginata* Denis and Schiff., *Cyrrhia icteritia* Hufn. and *Rivula sericealis* Scop. which does not appear to have been noted previously in the Highlands.

The following day we regretfully moved on, driven out by *Culicoides impunctatus* and its allies. Our new pitch was near the tiny village of Sallschy on the shores of Loch Long in Ross-shire where we stayed for almost a week. Although the weather was pleasant by day, few nights were suitable for mothing either because of wind or cold. The 7th was the best night when over 40 species were taken including *S. costaestrigalis*, *Eumichtis adusta* Esp., *Bombycia viminalis* Fab. and two very late *Xanthorrhoe montanata* Denis and Schiff.

One non-entomological highlight of the week was when the whole family made an energetic climb up to see the Falls of Glomach with their splendid single drop of over 300 feet.

Further north we had to stay near Gairloch for a couple of days whilst the exhaust was welded back on to the car by a dour Scotsman whose first smile was when he accidentally set fire to the car boot. Luckily the only damage was to the boys' plastic football. We went as far north as Inchnadamph in Sutherland, where I hoped to collect on the limestone of the nature reserve. As we obtained permission, the most violent wind sprang up and the night was wild and stormy. Reluctantly, we decided to head for home.

August 20th found me at Ambersham Common again, but it was a poor night. *P. hippocastanaria* was still on the wing but *Euxoa tritici* Linn. was now the most numerous species. *C. ambigua* was now making its second and more usual appearance. Other species of note in late August were *Scopula conjugata* Borkh. on the 21st and *Acasis viretata* Hübn., *Mormo maura* Linn. and *C. albipunctata* on the 23rd.

A final trip to Ambersham Common on the 25th, however, produced a nice surprise in the form of *Coenobia rufa* Haw. along with three *Anarta myrtilli* Linn. Altogether 113 species of moths were noted in Sussex in the latter third of August. There was little evidence of migration and the maximum number of *P. gamma* in the trap was six compared with the swarms of 1973.

The first week of September came in with violent storms and torrential rain. This was followed by a calm and rather mild period which was quite productive, especially for butterflies. On the 6th the first *Vanessa cardui* Linn. of the season was seen in Arundel Park. On the 9th, a vast area of buddleia in Revell Wood was visited and on the few remaining blooms I counted nine *N. io*, 15 *A. urticae*, five *V. cardui* and six *V. atalanta*. The last named species was generally scarce this season, being usually seen in ones and twos.

On the 10th, there were plenty of butterflies in Arundel Park including *A. agestis*, fresh specimens of *Maniola jurtina* Linn. and two *L. phlaeas*. This last species has been scarce throughout the year. Good numbers of the hawk dragonfly *Aeshna mixta* Latr. by the River Arun suggested an influx of migrants.

On the night of the 19th, one *Agrotis ipsillon* Hufn. and *P. porphyria* Denis and Schiff. turned up at the trap, strengthening the evidence of migration. On the 10th, a male *Ennomos autumnaria* Wernb. turned up at the garden trap. The 11th was a very mild night and 47 species came to the trap with 23 *P. gamma* (which were certainly migrants), though two *Eupithecia phoeniceata* Rambur were probably local as a row of *Cupressus macrocarpus* lines my neighbour's drive. Two more *E. autumnaria* were present and this species occurred regularly until the 20th. Another interesting species was *Epione repandata* Hufn.

On the 13th, I took my only *Asphidalia diluta* Denis and Schiff. of the year, and the 14th was another good night with two more *E. phoeniceata*, six *A. ipsillon*, 53 *Amathes c-nigrum* Linn., but only eight *P. gamma*. *Antitype flavicincta* Denis and Schiff. occurred on the 19th.

September continued with rapidly declining numbers of moths. Many of the autumn species were late to appear and numbers were low. *Agrochola lychnidis* Denis and Schiff. did not appear until the 23rd. *Omphaloscelis lunosa* Haw. appeared on the 11th and reached a peak of 114 on the 20th—less than half the numbers for 1973.

October followed the general trend of the year producing little that was unusual. *Lithophane leautieri* Boisd. appeared on the 19th and reached a maximum of seven on the 15th compared with 21 on the 6th in 1973. Occasional specimens occurred until 30th November. The only other interesting species were *S. costaestrigalis* and *Lithophane semibrunnea* Haw. on the 15th, followed by *Dasycampa rubiginea* Denis and Schiff. on the 24th.

November began with a period of mild damp weather and some good catches were made. *Eupsilia transversata* Haw. and *Conistra vaccinii* Linn. were far more numerous than in 1973. On the 2nd I took my M.V. trap to Houghton Forest and *Ptilophila plumigera* Denis and Schiff. was amongst 19 species captured. Two *Poecilocampa populi* were also taken. On the 6th I took a single *Brachionycha sphinx* Hufn. The common autumn moths continued to occur until the end of the month and on 3rd December I put away my trap to await the 1975 season.